

Conference Paper

Digital Life Middle-Class on Instagram: Like, Share and Comment

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Abstract

Instagram, today as a result of technology that is acculturated with economic, social and cultural factors, brings *leisure* to the middle class, they do activities freely in life such as hobbies, recreation. The middle class in accessing Instagram is reduced by the Instagram algorithm to be a one-dimensional human. The middle class will be a uniform individual with the same activities *like share*, and *comment*. The middle class is a lasting individual who runs consumerism where everything becomes a commodity and is trapped in relations in the algorithm of relationships made by Instagram. For the middle-class Instagram is a lifestyle and daily activity. Instagram, which is mediated via cell phone, is a new socialization space that frees someone from the rules and disciplines of the patriarchal system. This activity results in the middle class recognizing, embracing and exploring things that cannot be expressed in everyday reality. Instagram in the middle class produces digital life practices that want to show a lifestyle.

This study examines the phenomenon of middle-class practice in showing the practice of digital life: like share and comment on Instagram. Researchers will use a virtual ethnographic method. The virtual ethnographic approach will be carried out because this research is an object in cyberspace so that it can adequately understand the way the subject interacts and collaborates through observed phenomena. Instagram is a photo showroom, a kind of private space because the user gallery can be designed in such a way as the user wishes, users upload whatever happens around them, which is considered to represent user activity. The three accounts examined by @fajarmantoo, @herni_maryuliani and @rosakusumaazhar present activities in digital life. The fact that manifests these two accounts is that consumption and production in the Instagram arena provide the formation of social reality. Instagram becomes a social reality forming tool that can give an idea of how activities in the middle class when on Instagram.

Keywords: digital life, Instagram, Middle Class

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1. Introduction

One of the latest technology products, including computers, which was initially used as a calculating tool, then developed following the human mindset transformed into a

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versatile instrument. Computers follow the flow of human activities that have network capabilities in the form of the internet, whose logic works to connect one computer activity to another computer, thus providing a lot of convenience in various ways to support activities. The emergence of internet technology presents new entities in dealing with internet networks which are often called *cyberspace*. The word "cyberspace" (from *cybernetics* and *space*) originated and was first introduced by the writer of the science fiction novel, William Gibson in his storybook, "*Burning Chrome*," in 1982 and became popular in the next novel, *Neuromancer*, 1984 which states that:

"Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced by children being taught mathematical concepts... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Light of light ranged in non-space of the mind, clusters, and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding." (Gibson, 1986: 42).

Departing from this understanding, it can be simplified that cyberspace is an integration of various communication technology devices and computer networks (in the form of sensors, transducers, connections, transmissions, processors, signals, controllers) that can connect communication equipment (computers, mobile phones, instrumentation electronics, etc.) that are spread all over the world interactively. The internet becomes an integral part of the reality of everyday life. Internet access is getting easier and cheaper contributing infinitely to virtual reality from entities in this cyber domain. Applications that connect people to people - network start to grow to adapt to the needs of this virtual entity. This application developed into social media, media based on networks that are always *online* connecting people to people.

Social media uses-based technology to *web* convert communication into a non-stop dialogic space during connections *server*, each entity can create, edit, publicize, promote, upload desired photos and videos, with application development that presents effectiveness, efficiency, speed, interactive and varied. Social media opens up space in dealing with interacting between computer owners, opening sharing spaces *offline* to networking *online*, and creating practices *leisure*.

Instagram in the middle class parse many lifestyle practices into digital life; they are connected, build communities, even produce and share content as explained by McLuhan who views the media as an "*extension of man*," an extension of human hands (Serafinelli, 2018: 26). Instagram as a medium becomes a space for middle-class users to seize social meanings in society, and strengthen the bond between humans and consumption objects. Consumption in a person's lifestyle will involve typical

dimensions which are not only related to life needs physiologically. The symbolization of consumption patterns in “*digital life*” forms its own identity so that a lifestyle that is shared in social networks can portray or give a sign to the existence of someone in a particular social class. In this chapter the understanding of middle-class practices and exploration of the middle class is parsed, how middle-class practices and exploration in their daily activities. Instagram as a cyber commodity wants to unite and become this entity as part of people’s lifestyles, connectedness between Instagramers (Instagram users). Communication between humans on Instagram can occur at any time as long as it is connected online; almost every user activity can be captured and published on Instagram in seconds. Effectiveness, efficiency, fast, interactive and varied become the mainstay of Instagram. In Instagram photos are attached with signs that can function as markers and markers as well as in the user’s photo narration and are interpreted by the followers of the narration in the space presented, so that the space for the articulation of meaning can both merge in the space “*offline-online.*” For the middle-class cellular phone usage, lifestyle, and access to social media become the lifestyle of the most middle class (Akmaliah, 2016: 2). Even social media mediated through cellular phones is a new space for socialization which frees women from the rules and disciplines of the patriarchal system. Enabling them to recognize, embrace and explore their “darkness” (Carnicelli, McGillivray, & McPherson, 2017: 207).

Conscious or not, this virtual reality presented on Instagram makes it easier and cheaper to make a significant contribution to virtual reality. It is as if it can be said that the entity becomes bound in the virtual world. This entity makes the world *offline-online* not only connected in parallel, but fused and fused (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012: 1). Instagram is a photo gallery, a kind of private space because the user gallery can be designed in such a way as the user wishes, users upload whatever happens around them, which is considered to represent user activity. Sometimes the motive for uploading text in the form of *captions*, photos or images, the sound is not addressed to whom. Communication cannot be explained to who is involved in it or to whom the text in the form of *captions*, photos or images, and the sound is intended.

Instagram users are part of the community who want to share and have a self-concept to play specific roles in society. Expectations that are influenced by the environment are presented by interpretation through identity. The analysis is by imaging something, behavior, speech style, fashion style, and actions that are attached to him as the *mood of production* that can form and create themselves when interacting. Instagram as a visual media can present certain symbols as a tool to produce meaning from an identity that you want to convey. Photos shown on Instagram reflect codes, values, and beliefs for the

culture as a whole (Clarke, 1977: 28). Instagram as a result of technology acculturated with economic, social and cultural aspects of presenting *leisure* for users to carry out activities freely in life such as hobbies, recreation, increasing knowledge about art and culture and also filling in actual activities for leisure time (Jary, 1991: 352). And also Veeger (1993: 101), argues that humans practice as in Instagram as "*man is an agent, he is, in his apprehension, a center of spontaneous activity unfolding; teleological activity. By the force of being such an agent, he is possessed of a taste for effective work and a distance for futile effort.*" This thought makes people always interact, attracting it to everyday human reality presented by following social institutions. Hierarchy (Pranata) as behavioral patterns that have been created, agreed upon, and then required by the community. All institutions function as a means that is expected to establish behavior, where this function does not separate them from human power over their society. This process does not originate from the law but is based on human nature to think about circumstances and objectives and adapt themselves well. The method of social change also applies to cyberspace like Instagram, which is social media.

Photos on Instagram practices as *leisure* as well as forms of interpretation intended to be consumed by the public. When viewed from a social aspect, the resulting images have social meanings such as Bourdieu's statement in "*the social definition of Photography*" pattern of community behavior in producing hegemonic photos by modern aesthetics that are formed according to the categories of norms that govern the world in general. The *economics symbol* is presented as if the body is a spectacle (*body as spectacle*). *Leisure* referred to by Veblen is anything or activity that does not belong to the everyday world such as productive work and from habits of mind *workmanlike* (Mills, 1957: xii). Vellen (1957, 44-45), means that time is unproductive, abstinence from work.

Many studies have been carried out on cyberculture, digital research, acceleration of interactivity, but cyberculture is hypertextual, dispersal, virtuality, with *non-linearity*, and distance utilization, *modularity*, re-mediation, demassification, *asynchronicity*, and convergence (James, 2012: 69-117) has not been explored further. Digital cyberculture is meant how the form of digital data can be better used from analog data in terms of speed and the real side that is based on digital and can only be done with computer media. Although currently, cyber media is also accessible with technology *mobile* such as smartphones as the development of computer media. The internet also shapes a new culture, concerning changing relationships with consumers, namely consuming and at the same time producing what is consumed. The capitalist system can explore the opportunities of free labor from prosumer in this Web 2.0. Capitalism can exploit

consumers and in this process can even generate more enormous profits. The research that discusses that is research on "*Social media, presumption, and dispositions: New mechanisms of the construction of subjectivity*" from Melita Zajc (Zajc, 2015) that reveals social media problems from a presumption perspective. The concept of presumption in the digital world has unified production and consumption and has resulted in the distinctiveness of social media. Exploration of this research shows hope about the social potential of combining production and consumption on social media by focusing on the issue of user participation in the concept of communication media in the digital world. The expected potential for how consumption is not too much attention, because it only explores the production of meaning in communicating using social media, social media is specifically not explicitly mentioned. Therefore, this study tries to examine the phenomenon of practices *Digital life* middle class in showing significant changes that have no limitations in space and time, how the middle class fights in displaying digital life in the cyber world.

The methodology used in this study is virtual ethnography because it adopts a model of participant observation that is used ethnography; the difference is participant observation carried out in a virtual environment. In addition to virtual ethnography, there are also concepts of ethnographic studies *online* such as netnography and the virtual world (Boellstorff et al., 2012). Because virtual ethnography does not explain in detail the stages of application of the method making it difficult for researchers to study in conducting research. Virtual ethnographic methods are not so different from studies that use ethnographic approaches or methods in general. Starting from the technique of collecting data to the analysis used, everything depends on the needs and problems of the research that will be examined (Hine, 2000: 12). This research was conducted in the Instagram room because the phenomenon found in the Instagram room was a study that will discuss practices *leisure* when there are photos of subject uploads in the *gallery* or also feeds *offline*. The informants of this study were selected *purposively* consisting of 2 women and one male who had an Instagram account that carried out consumption-production practices in the Instagram room. Criteria for education to graduate from college and have a job and average personal expenses of 1 million and above.

2. Results and Discussion

The entry of individuals in social media is becoming familiar because internet technology is a necessity in today's social life. Entering the cyber world means dissolving in a created culture, as technology opens the lives of individuals. Moreover, "*Identity is perceived as*

fluid and changeable, and its creation as a never-ending task,” the identity of individuals using social media is not rigid-melting following the flow of cyberculture. The middle class is well aware that when they enter the cyber world, they are faced with individuals they did not know before. The choice of social media they use is an option, as the informants revealed as follows:

I have a Facebook account that often many ask for friendship and thousands of friends on Facebook... I don't like material on Facebook that *shares any share* market can enter, so I'm dead. (Herni, July 3, 2018)

I joined social media like Facebook from 2008. I am careful because this is social media for everyone who is friends with we can see the status and photos we *upload*. (Rosa, June 29, 2018)

There are a few moments I take care of, what I *share*, just happened to be on Facebook. Afraid, what I *share* doesn't match the same ones who are friends with me on Facebook. (Fajar, May 10, 2018)

The reasons pinned by @fajarmantoo, @herni_maryuliani and @ rosakusumaazhar Informants in using social media are seen in the informants' statements, they give reasons that when entering the cyber world, many want to know who the informants are like on Facebook even though they are known only in friendship channels of the same account in the same application. *"Sites like MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter have become a social phenomenon, allowing people to connect and develop relationships with long-distance (and sometimes forgotten) friends and colleagues. These relationships can develop into a smaller community "* (Mitra, 2010: 48). Social media requires users to share their identities on various questions when they register on social media, which is regulated in *terms and conditions* of social media. Digital technology is changing the nature of society, allowing people from all over the world to know we and ourselves become members of the cyber community. A community that makes users friends with others without having to be geographically close to each other. In human civilization, the formation of society has been considered an essential aspect of its development. Communities arise because humans start organizing themselves into social groups, and form the same factors. Individuals in the community have a shared method of making mutual understandings in their world by creating their symbols. At the most sophisticated level, these symbols make a language that helps people in their daily lives and practices. This habit involves the use of the same word, which leads to the development of culture.

Sharing identity in a middle-class virtual cyber-community world has a precautionary phenomenon, informants realize that in other virtual communities other individuals can easily construct identity when in the virtual world, but the informants in this study still recognize that they are in a community global and network "*Communities came into existence from the time that human beings began to organize themselves into social groups, and all communities have had some essential factors that were true*" (Mitra, 2010: 49). As stated by Rosa:

There are a lot of *things* about me that have become DM, so there are some photos that I *share*, and I lock... because I know, social media shares my experience and work with everyone, especially Facebook. (Rosa, 29 June 2018)

Consuming, contributing and creating are behaviors that are always routine when entering social media space, "*Provide unlimited means social media for internet users to interact, express, share and create content about anything*" (Muntinga, Moorman, & Smit, 2011: 15). Consuming is the most natural action in social media activities, only opening the pages of other users without contributing to creating content such as reading and watching, researchers obtained this after tracing each post and asking directly in an interview with the informant. Another preferred middle-class activity is sharing content that informants make. This activity is a form of interaction between informants and other users, including participating in forums in the way of commenting on other users' posts in chatroom *comment* and also sharing uploads from other accounts. Creating content is the highest activity in social media; this activity involves the production and uploading of material and this is related to whether or not liked by other users. This activity spends considerable time on its users.

Creating content on Instagram requires several attempts to find knowledge that is different from others. People use more cognitive effort when writing or uploading photos than when consuming messages (Piolat, Olive, & Kellogg, 2005). It was felt right by @herni_maryuliani, and he made content to be truly following his environment as the wife of a businessman who has colleagues everywhere and as a wife who has two daughters. Herni takes care of what he uploads on Instagram, because if he uploads a husband he can access Husbands, Children, Colleagues, new friends and this is interrelated because social networks like spiders are bound in one network. Ever on the occasion of one of his son's friends who were still in grade 3 in junior high school, revealed to Herni, "Aunt is wonderful, happy to see Instagram auntie."



Figure 1: Herni's informants and family on Instagram.

Instagram became the second life, so what happens in the world is *offline* connected in the world *online*; what is shared becomes something that has a correlation with real life. Some informant researchers asked them to spend a lot of time exploring the world of Instagram, some answered that they did not spend too much time accessing the Internet, "When waiting in the car, just when relaxing at home..." for example Herni's answer, Rosa also answered, "well... on the sidelines of routine work". But when asked in depth, is it done every day, some informants such as @fajarmantoo, @herni_maryuliani and @rosakusumaazhar agreed. The pleasure of surfing for the Middle Class in the world of the Internet is indeed not felt, summarized in the Hootsuite.com report that in Indonesia social media is consumed on average 3 hours 23 minutes. Instagram consumption for Herni to be *conspicuous leisure* that sticks to his activities, "The act of consuming" is an act of utilizing, using, or enjoying something material or nonmaterial.

Uploads Informants in their world on Instagram are also indeed guarded; they pay close attention to what they make. This upload can be seen by its followers and often commented on. Just as Herni only occasionally removes uploads in his Instagram gallery, for him the activity of sharing experiences that occur in daily life can connect relations and give messages to *followers* his. The messages generated and uploaded by the gallery are prevalent, such as the upload example made on this December 19, 2018,



Figure 2: Herni's informant and his friends and caption.

"People who want to show where your mistakes are, that's your real friend. While people who spread nonsense by always praising you, they are executioners who will destroy you. "# small friends #sahabatdarismp (Herni's caption December 19, 2019)

The caption made, commented on by various friends on Instagram, such as by; @303asep, "Mantaff djiwaaa 🤔 🤔," @nice_nila, "Setujuuuuuu tea, indeed is still singing the wae the", @dindaidris, "iishhh seleub @herni_maryuliani," @mahshaquilacakes, "ish ish iiiiiisshh cateuuut... 🤔 🤔". Those comments must have occurred in uploads that are indeed felt attractive by Instagram users. Commenting on a status on Instagram is the life of Instagram. Interestingly when the informants commented on each other, they felt like close friends often met. "Even though they think they are all friends, even though they are conscious, like to forget who is this " Said Herni, responding to knowing or not by commenting on himself in his gallery. The closeness between users on social networks was studied by Hiram Tim, in their research they found a phenomenon that behavioral beliefs about Instagram consisted of five factors, social media became a personal satisfaction, self-use features, socializing roles, easy access to product information and entertainment, giving normative beliefs, and friends on social networks are considered as siblings, siblings, close friends or peers, friends in general, informants. (Ting & Run, 2015)

In the opportunity to upload photos and captions on the informants' Instagram, Informant @fajarmantoo, @herni_maryuliani and @ rosakusumaazhar did several activities on Instagram. Upload and also access other users' Instagram feeds. In viewing the gallery, other users usually use their time to comment on the uploads of their Instagram

friends by giving likes (♥), because this symbol is part of their digital relationship. This like (♥) sign is similar to that of Facebook because Facebook has acquired Instagram. A sign that another user likes the uploaded photo is giving a like (♥) to red (♥). Based on the duration of time and the number that marks like (♥), then a picture is considered to be liked by friends in the network. Uploading pictures and giving likes, plays an essential role in helping users maintain relationships with strong and weak ties. "Sharing information" on social media tends to be used with various activities such as; talk more, post mentions and reply to other users so that the fabric of social interaction in *online* is more in-depth in social relationships. Social attachment to friendship on Instagram, there is no direct relationship between the number of followers and photos shared (Hu, Manikonda, & Kambhampati, 2004)

Informants give an assessment of their activities in social media on Instagram that the highest level of social media behavior is creating messages or upload content. In this activity, the informant felt that he was mobilizing more cognitive effort. Various social media behaviors that can be observed and taken by category, as follows consume, contribute, and creates content. When divided into cognitive effort levels in interacting on Instagram, it can be divided into several categories; The first level is "like" marked by clicking the "like" symbol on Instagram this is the lowest activity. "Like" is a natural activity because it only clicks on a symbol and it requires fewer commitments than other businesses. While commenting on uploads of other Instagram users is an activity that requires additional cognitive effort. Third, sharing content by creating your content and this activity is higher than comments. As Rosa did, he chose his upload with a choice of caption words with indeed selected words).

Uploads are part of social media users doing strategically in self-presentation (van Dijck, 2013) For example when presenting themselves on social media, individuals carefully consider public evaluations (Rui & Stefanone, 2013) and what self-presentation *online* consistent with offline self-presentations. (DeAndrea & Walther, 2011) This shows that strategic behavior related to presenting oneself with uploads requires more cognitive effort than comments. In other words, when sharing submissions, users are more committed to giving a "good image" about themselves than when commenting on submissions, informants merely respond to the needs of the relationship - maintaining relationships as friends in the world of Instagram.



Figure 3: Rosa uploads in its Instagram gallery.

3. Conclusions

Instagram's presence helped construct social experiences through exposure, body simulation and representation. Realities and simulations assemble socially what is the body inside Instagram. Informants such as the spectacle community whose aspects of life are filled with various forms of spectacle and make it a reference to the values and goals of life. The spectacle here is not just a message or meaning conveyed by Instagram, but how all forms of commodities are. The informant's mindset (@fajarmantoo, @herni_maryuliani and @rosakusumaazhar) was formed into not only consuming the benefits of a commodity product but also consuming the value of "to be looking at", and following the logic of Instagram which is consuming practices *digital life: like, share and comment* on Instagram which is presented in daily activities. Instagram was offered to social life so that it changed the definition of the full awareness of the Informant, who began to know the *concept of being, being having, and then appearing. Appearance* is by doing common interactions on Instagram and jointly practicing digital life: likes, shares, and comments on Instagram, without feeling mastered. Commodities such as Instagram move autonomously to deceive and take over all aspects of human life. A life marked by the reality of false-relationship virtualism is believed to be real life, enchanting Instagram users to always make needs and still become a daily activity and even reproduce the self-image they want to show. The power of image in a spectacle

society can move and motivate individuals as if acting like being hypnotized and always using Instagram. Everything that is imaged (abstract) is seen as the most rational by informants (Fajarmanto, Rosa Kusuma, Herni). So that unwittingly the daily life routines are constructed within the scope of digital society in digital life, multiplying illusion construction in cyberspace life, and are always produced and consumed by Instagram users.

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